

SOLDIERS AND SAILORS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

—OF—

RHODE ISLAND.

PERSONAL NARRATIVES.

THIRD SERIES,

Nos. 11 to 20.

1885-87

CONTENTS.

- No. 11. RECOLLECTIONS OF SERVICE IN THE TWELFTH REGIMENT RHODE ISLAND VOLUNTEERS. BY OSCAR LAPHAM.
- No. 12. THE MARCH TO THE SEA. BY CHARLES A. HOPKINS.
- No. 13. REMINISCENCES OF SERVICE WITH COLORED TROOPS IN THE ARMY OF THE CUMBERLAND. 1863-65. BY THOMAS J. MORGAN.
- No. 14. FRONTIER SERVICE DURING THE REBELLION; OR, A HISTORY OF COMPANY K, FIRST INFANTRY CALIFORNIA VOLUNTEERS. BY GEORGE H. PETTIS.
- No. 15. REMINISCENCES OF SERVICE WITH THE TWELFTH REGIMENT RHODE ISLAND VOLUNTEERS, AND A MEMORIAL OF COL. GEORGE H. BROWNE. BY PARDON E. TILLINGHAST.
- No. 16. BATTERY D, FIRST RHODE ISLAND LIGHT ARTILLERY, AT THE BATTLE OF ANTIETAM, SEPTEMBER 17, 1862. BY J. ALBERT MONROE.
- No. 17. RELIEF OF WASHINGTON, NORTH CAROLINA, BY THE FIFTH RHODE ISLAND VOLUNTEERS. BY WILLIAM W. DOUGLAS.
- No. 18. A PRIVATE'S REMINISCENCES OF THE FIRST YEAR OF THE WAR. BY E. BENJAMIN ANDREWS.
- No. 19. BATTLE OF KELLY'S FORD, MARCH 17, 1863. BY JACOB B. COOKE.
- No. 20. THE INVESTMENT OF FORT PULASKI. BY ALONZO WILLIAMS.

Soldiers and Sailors Historical Society of Rhode Island.

The Society invites the attention of those interested to the publications known as "Personal Narratives" of Events in the War of the Rebellion, issued under its auspices. Of these papers, three series have been published to this date (January, 1889,) comprising fifty numbers, the titles of which are given on the following pages of this circular. Some of these are out of print and scarce. Copies of some of the papers can be supplied by the Society, and occasionally full sets can be obtained.

In compliance with urgent requests, the Society has commenced the publication of the Fourth Series. The numbers will be issued, as heretofore, at convenient intervals, and at the same price, 40 cents per number. The edition is limited to 250 copies. The pamphlets are small quartos, of the size of this circular. A few additional subscriptions will be received.

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No. 19. Battle of Kelly's Ford, March 17, 1863. By JACOB B. COOKE.

No. 20. The Investment of Fort Pulaski. By ALONZO WILLIAMS.

PERSONAL NARRATIVES

OF EVENTS IN THE

WAR OF THE REBELLION,

BEING PAPERS READ BEFORE THE

RHODE ISLAND SOLDIERS AND SAILORS

HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

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RECOLLECTIONS OF SERVICE

IN THE

TWELFTH REGIMENT,

R. I. VOLUNTEERS.

BY

OSCAR LAPHAM,

[Late First Lieutenant Co. B, Twelfth Rhode Island Volunteers.]

PROVIDENCE:

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RECOLLECTIONS
OF
SERVICE IN THE TWELFTH REGIMENT,
R. I. VOLUNTEERS.

[Read before the Society, November 18, 1884.]

THIS regiment was recruited in the summer of 1862 under the call of the President for volunteers for nine months. The disasters of the Peninsula, the defeat and scattering of Pope's army in Virginia, and the Union victory at Antietam, had followed each other in rapid succession, and it was evident that the veterans of the Army of the Potomac would all be required in the great struggle with Lee, about to take place somewhere in Northern Virginia.

It was, therefore, commonly supposed that the nine months' troops would be stationed in the defences about Washington, while the older troops,

with a few rapid and masterly movements, proceeded to capture Lee and his army, which had thus far, with singular perversity, refused to surrender, either in the Chickahominy swamps, in the valleys of the Blue Ridge, or among the hills of Maryland.

Instead, however, of luxuriating in comfortable quarters in sight of the dome of the Capitol, and dining on beefsteak and fried eggs, and going regularly to sleep every night in comfortable beds, surrounded by peaceable friends, our valiant regiment had, before Christmas of that year, crossed and re-crossed Long Bridge, picketed miles of rough country in the neighborhood of Clouds Mills, marched in mud, rain and snow storms down through Maryland from Washington to Port Tobacco, crossed the Potomac river in transports in bitter cold from Liverpool Landing to Acquia Creek, marched thence to Falmouth on the Rappahannock, crossed that stream on pontoon bridges under an artillery fire, and participated in one of the most furious, disastrous and bloody battles of the war; it had covered the rear of the retreating army on a dark and rainy night in December, and, while the Christmas hearths at home

glowed with gladness and warmth, had begun the struggle with winter in the open field with salt pork and hard tack for food, and shelter tents, or huts of earth walls and a cloth roof for houses.

Taking leave of Virginia in the last days of March in the following year, we entered upon entirely different scenes and duties, and engaged for the next four months in ceaseless activity upon a new and most interesting field. Transported by rail from Newport News, Virginia, to Cincinnati, and thence to Lexington, Kentucky, we began a march southward, at first through a beautiful, fertile country, and later, entering a broken, barren and mountainous region and over precipitous roads, pausing at last on the bank of the Cumberland river, near the line of Tennessee.

The regiment was collected from various parts of the State and assembled on Dexter training ground, in Providence, where it was encamped several weeks to be organized and drilled. The weather was fine, and the camp was gay with visitors daily, the dress parade especially being extensively patronized. Here was the first taste of camp life and military discipline.

Late in the afternoon of October 21, 1862, under command of Colonel George H. Browne, we embarked on the train for New York, taking the cars at Olneyville. It was a scene of much excitement. I was ordered to take a detachment and establish a guard at the place of embarkation, to hold the crowd back from the cars and prevent their filling the train. Friends and relatives of the boys begged for one more farewell ; mothers and sisters and wives were in tears. But the hour had struck, the die was cast ; the solid ranks moved steadily down through the throng within the impassable line, and a thousand more lives were committed to the chances of war. There was too much of novelty in our new situation, and too much anticipation of what was before us, to give room for any prolonged regrets on our part. There was just enough of mystery and uncertainty in what we were going to, to make us anxious for its development. Later on there were times when our curiosity was more than satisfied. When we encountered the genuine reality we found occasions when our interest in the proceedings took a different turn, and we would willingly have left our share to

other hands, if we could have done so with equal honor.

The journey to Washington was long and tedious, and we were not permitted even the cheer and hospitality which greeted all troops passing through Philadelphia to the front. Our route took us by way of Harrisburg, with many long stops. Our boys even here did not forget their opportunities, as an occasional quack of a duck from the gloom of some car plainly attested. They took naturally to the situation with an alacrity quite astonishing for new recruits with so short a military experience.

We encamped for a night in Washington near the Capitol, and next day moved up Pennsylvania avenue and Fourteenth street, across Long Bridge, to Camp Chase, in the red dirt of Virginia, near Arlington Heights. Here exposure, cold rains, and lying on the ground in Sibley tents, began to tell on many constitutions, and the hollow and feeble coughs of the poor fellows all over the grounds in the dead silence of the night, told plainly of the presence of that invisible enemy that destroys more armies than shot and shell.

We soon moved from here southward to Fairfax Seminary, and encamped on a fine southern slope overlooking the city of Alexandria. We were now attached to the brigade commanded by Colonel D. R. Wright, of New Haven, Connecticut, in the first brigade of the division of General Casey. The brigade was composed, besides ourselves, of the Fifteenth Connecticut, Colonel Wright's regiment, the Thirteenth New Hampshire, Colonel Stevens, and the Twenty-seventh New Jersey, Colonel Mindil. This brigade was employed in picketing beyond Clouds Mills, one regiment being sent out at a time, and remaining on duty twenty-four hours.

At this camp, Colonel Browne began to give attention to sanitary regulations, which he vigorously enforced throughout our term of service, often overseeing in person the details of the work. The men entrusted to his care were not to be permitted to suffer in health or efficiency from their own ignorance or carelessness. This matter of cleanliness and good order in the company streets, tents, about the cook-house, and all around the various camps established from time to time, became somewhat

later the subject of the most assiduous attention and rivalry among the several companies, and one to which I may refer again.

We had been at Fairfax Seminary but a few days when I received orders from Colonel Browne to report at brigade headquarters to Colonel Wright, commanding the brigade, for duty as aide on his personal staff. I put on my best clothes and reported to what seemed to me a most tremendous and awe-inspiring presence ; but I had learned one principle of military duty and etiquette, and that was, when in the presence of superior officers to stand erect and say nothing, take my orders in silence, salute and retire. And this I rigidly adhered to.

The brigade headquarters at Fairfax Seminary were in the house of Bishop Johns, of Virginia. The bishop had no use for the house at that time, and I suppose that was the reason Colonel Wright was able to obtain it. We also had secured some very comfortable furniture and good beds, and a splendid library adorned the walls. The grounds were elegant, and all the appointments first class. I often thought while luxuriating in this beautiful place that

the bishop must have been uncommonly patriotic to devote so much to make the soldiers comfortable, while it could not be supposed that he, in absenting himself on our account, could be as well provided for.

There was a capital set at headquarters. Lieutenant Penrose, of the regular army, was chief of staff,—a wiry, restless fellow, chafing for a battle, thoroughly acquainted with every detail of the service, for he was born in the army and knew nothing else. A tireless and fearless rider, he led me many a ride from morning till night without leaving the saddle, over bogs and corduroy roads, through swamps and brush and forest; but I had trained and rowed in the University boat crew, and was ready for any scramble, however rough.

There was Dr. Halcombe, of Connecticut,—tall and rugged, bluff and vigorous. One night, going through Maryland, the doctor and some more of us were looking about for a place to sleep. We got into a little cottage and occupied the parlor. By common consent we assigned the sofa for the doctor, while the rest stretched on the floor. This sofa hap-

pened to be very narrow, and rounded up resolutely in the middle, and it was covered with very slippery hair-cloth. The doctor got ready to be very comfortable after a tedious day's march, and, wrapped in his blankets, stretched his long frame upon this little sofa. Presently came a grunt of displeasure, then he grew more restless, and as we were just settling down to sleep, the doctor bounded off the sofa with an oath, declaring he would rather sleep lengthwise on a bologna sausage than stay on that sofa.

There was the chaplain, who never turned his back on a good meal, and never came nearer profanity than to say "Condemn it;" the brigade quartermaster from Connecticut, a first-rate fellow; a little chap named Van Sann, from New Jersey, who was a clerk, had a great fancy for negro delineation, and informed me he had belonged to more than one minstrel troupe.

General Casey, commander of the division, occasionally came over from his headquarters in Washington, with a large and brilliant staff, to inspect the picket line, in which we joined, coming back to Colonel Wright's quarters to dinner. There was a

handsome spread on the bishop's mahogany dining-table on those days, served in courses, and much high converse, for our Colonel Wright was an able lawyer, our chaplain had written for the magazines, and several of General Casey's staff were West Pointers.

This was transpiring in the beautiful November days,—the weather was fine, the rebels at a safe distance, the scenery picturesque. There stretched the noble and historic Potomac; the bluffs on the shores and eminences in all directions were covered with forts and flying the stars and stripes; the city of Alexandria lay below us; the pomp of war on every hand. It was all strangely new. The very color of the mud seemed for the time a characteristic of aristocratic Virginia, a coat of arms as it were, for it was none of your common gray stuff, but that rich brick color which is the crowning glory of all our new houses, and its staying qualities were simply wonderful. The November haze hung over river and fort and forest, and there was plenty of mildly exciting service to keep the blood active and the appetite keen.

On the first day of December I was returning from Washington, and met the brigade *en route* to join the Army of the Potomac at Fredericksburg. We passed over Long Bridge and down along the river by the navy yard, across the East Branch, and stopped for the night just outside Uniontown. Continuing down the left bank of the Potomac, the next night found us near Piscataway, which we passed the next morning, halting the third night near another Uniontown, which consisted of cross-roads and one small shanty.

Two days more brought us to our last bivouac before beginning to cross the river to Acquia Creek. It had snowed all the afternoon, covering the ground, and the men had to pass the night on that ground under their shelter tents, which they had carried on their backs. It seemed to me a most serious situation, and in the evening, as soon as my duties would permit, I went in the greatest anxiety to investigate their wretched plight. To my surprise all hands were gay and jolly, and as comfortable as need be. There was plenty of wood, and rousing fires burning all about; the snow was brushed away, and the little

tents set up around the fires ; hot coffee and rations from the haversacks were passing around, and altogether it was a bright and lively scene, teeming with real comfort.

The next morning I was sent forward to find the landing. It was on a point of land made by a sharp bend of the river to the left, and was exposed to bleak winds. The brigade was moved down to this point and began to cross, as near as I can remember, about noon. It was a slow process, owing to lack of transportation, and night was upon us with two regiments still to cross. Meanwhile the cold had increased, and it became absolutely necessary to provide fires. All the way down through Maryland the most scrupulous attention had been paid to the protection of private property, and with the exception of some individual pilfering, nothing had been taken. Now, on this cold plain, there were some large piles of dry fence rails, which, as the cold increased and the night approached, became the subject of earnest consideration among the shivering officers. The thing was argued *pro* and *con*, the constitutional lawyers being still scrupulous, but

their compunctions decreasing in direct ratio to the increase of the cold. The result was in accordance with human nature under such circumstances—there were soon long lines of blazing fires upon the plain, and the boys were safe from further suffering. Night fell; our regiment had gone over, but there were still two other regiments of the brigade huddled around the fires, and it was uncertain whether the transport would return that night or not. Colonel Wright, who was still suffering from an injury he had received some weeks before, decided there was no need of his remaining longer, asked some one of his staff to volunteer to stay to look out for the remaining regiments, whether they crossed that night or slept on the hither shore. I said I would accept that duty, and as the evening wore away and no transport appearing, I called the officers together for a council as to where they would pass the night. There was a side hill near by sheltered from the wind and covered with evergreens, but also covered with snow. The choice was between that location and the present, which had the advantage of the blazing fires. They decided to remain where they

were, and I started to ride back over rough, frozen ground, covered with ice and snow, to headquarters. My horse here cast a shoe, and I was obliged to dismount and lead him all the way, about two miles, back to quarters.

The next day was as severe as the preceding, and I was left to see the last remnants of baggage, etc., across, and did not land at Acquia Creek till after dark. I was entirely alone, and had no information whatever in what direction the brigade had gone. There were plenty of soldiers' quarters and store-houses all about, but nobody knew anything about the location of our troops. So many thousands of troops were moving, that nobody took particular note of anything so small as a brigade of a few thousand men. Supperless and cold, dreary and lonesome, I cast about me for somewhere to pass that dreadful night. Acres of canal boats and scows and transports filled the river, and the best I could do was to get on board a transport, and going below try to find a place as much sheltered from the wind as possible. Here I passed the night, or what remained of it, upon a plank, without so much as a blanket, with

mules stamping and braying overhead, making one of the most uncomfortable nights in my existence.

The next morning, after some exploration, I found our brigade some two miles out, on a rough side hill, in the snow, with fires made of pine boughs. The smoke from these fires was blinding, and every soldier of the Twelfth Regiment knows what "Camp Smoke" means. Thinking it about time for breakfast, I looked around to see what I could lay my hands on. I found Captain Longstreet, of Company B, who was my captain. He had a little chunk of salt pork and a handful of crumbs in the bottom of a cracker box ; there didn't seem to be any convenient way for cooking the pork, and so I devoured it raw, and washed it down with the cracker crumbs.

Lying here three days, we had orders to move on towards Falmouth, and came up with the Army of the Potomac, which stretched some miles up and down the Rappahannock, opposite Fredericksburg. This was on the evening of December 10, 1862, three days before the battle of Fredericksburg. Here we found that our brigade was to be a brigade no more, but the various regiments were to be sent

to strengthen other organizations in the Ninth Army Corps, our lot falling with the First Brigade, General Nagle, Second Division. That night I found the Fourth Rhode Island, and supped with my old classmate, Captain E. P. Brown. During the night I heard the rumbling of the pontoon bridges as they were being transported over the frozen ground to the river. Weeks before, in the pleasant November weather, I had seen these same pontoons floating quietly down the Potomac before we left Fairfax Seminary, and their whereabouts had been a subject of anxious speculation ever since Burnside had arrived at Fredericksburg. About four o'clock in the morning, the boom of cannon from the direction of the river suggested some serious thoughts. That morning I reported to Colonel Browne, who sent me to my company as First Lieutenant under Captain Longstreet. Thousands of troops were drawn out upon the plains under arms, ready to cross into Fredericksburg as soon as the pontoon bridges could be laid. Heavy cannonading went on all day for the purpose of clearing the opposite shore of rebel sharpshooters preparatory to laying the pontoons.

We lay here all day, and here the first man I had seen wounded in battle was brought back from towards the river.

The cannonade ceased at night and stillness settled down over that vast army, and during the silent watches I could hear the clocks in the church towers of the city tolling out the hours. It had seemed to me for weeks past that we were almost outside the pale of civilization. Living in open fields, seldom entering a habitable place, the total absence of ordinary comforts, bivouacking amidst snow-banks, and, above all, the apparent disregard and cheapness of human life, had served to create and intensify this feeling, but the sound of those bells, exactly as I had heard them a thousand times at home, renewed with strange intensity the recollection of all the peace and comfort and friendship which I had left behind, and for a time had almost forgotten.

The next day, December twelfth, we were under arms, and we could soon see that the army was in motion towards the river, and at length it came our turn. We filed out into the road and marched down towards the river and Fredericksburg. The city

extends down to the water's edge and backward up sloping ground. Behind the city is a plain of some extent, and beyond this Marye's Heights, which are about parallel with the river. On these heights the enemy was posted. The river on our side is skirted by a steep bluff approaching almost to the river bank. On this bluff, and directly opposite the city, is the Lacy house, a fine old mansion which had been surrounded with elegant grounds and trees, all of which were now in ruins. Our artillery was posted for a long distance up and down this bluff, and commanded the entire city and reached the enemy's works on Marye's Heights. A lively cannonade was going on across the valley, and as we were filing down through a gully or defile just above the Lacy house, to reach the pontoon bridge, a shell from the enemy went through the branches of a tree over our heads. As I was stepping upon the bridge I met and shook hands with a college classmate, Gamaliel Lyman Dwight, who was an officer in a Rhode Island battery. Troops, horses and artillery were crowding up to this little bridge, the top of which seemed only a few inches from the surface of the water, narrow

and without railings, a floating structure held in position by anchors. It seemed a frail thing to support an army, but it served the purpose well.

From the moment I entered that city until I got out of it, I felt a degree of helplessness and restraint, like a man with his hands tied, such as I think I never experienced anywhere else. Thousands and thousands of soldiers were huddled and crowded in the streets ; the city seemed packed with men, and all in a position where they could apparently do little or nothing to defend themselves against attack. It seemed to me entirely within the power of General Lee to have thrown the army into utter confusion and rout if he had seen fit to drop a few hundred shells into that crowded mass. As it was, he contented himself for that day shelling our troops as they approached the river, and with endeavoring to destroy the pontoons by dropping shells upon them. The location of the bridges, although not visible to the rebels, was easily enough determined by the direction taken by our troops to reach them, the bluff over which we approached the river being in perfectly plain sight from the rebel position. In the

course of the day they got the ranges so well that in one instance a regiment of infantry coming over the bluff by the flank was struck and some of the men evidently killed, breaking up the regiment quite badly. At the same time, a short distance above, along the bluff, was a long line of spectators in dark citizens' clothes who had come to witness the battle from what they had evidently supposed was a pretty safe distance. The breaking up of that line of dark-coated citizens was something magical ; it vanished like a flock of blackbirds.

Later in the day a regiment of cavalry, moving also by the flank, came slowly over the bluff to descend to the bridge exactly over the spot where the infantry regiment had passed. Again a shell struck almost in the same spot and exploded. The only notice taken of the occurrence was a slight swerve of the line to one side ; not a man left his place except those prostrated by the shot ; the line moved on as steadily and majestically as if on parade. And so all day long troops poured over the bluff down into the city and thronged its streets, until the whole place seemed one vast hive of armed men.

The city itself seemed to me to be about the size of Woonsocket, and this comparison was settled upon as correct, between Captain Hubbard, of Company F, who was himself a native of Woonsocket, and myself. There were several churches, at least one printing office, and many fine residences. It seemed singular to me how little damage the cannonade of the previous day had done to the town. Here and there a shot had passed through a building, but there was nothing that looked like destruction. Fine dwellings, richly furnished throughout, bearing every evidence of recent occupation, were all about us, and it appeared that the whole population, engaged in their usual vocations, had suddenly been expelled from their homes, leaving almost everything behind them, probably for want of transportation. This devoted city had suddenly found itself between two mighty armies as in a vise. Nothing but instant flight remained before those forces should close upon each other, and so the population, only a day or two before, taking of their possessions what little they could carry in their hands, poured out upon the roads leading from the city towards Richmond, and found

shelter where they could, giving up their homes to the fortunes of war. One family of colored people we did find who remained through the cannonade. They said they preferred their chances with the shot and shell to going south farther into the realm of slavery. A cannon ball went through their little house, but they were alive and unharmed, and cooked a johnny-cake for us.

I had a ubiquitous little darkey boy for a servant, who came to me not long after we reached our position in one of the streets in the city, and inquired whether I would like some griddle-cakes. The little rascal had plundered the flour barrel in a dwelling near by, and had got his fire and griddle in the yard, prepared to dispense refreshments to all comers.

The next morning, December thirteenth, opened with a heavy fog enveloping the city and much of the valley. As everybody knows, the position of the Confederates back of Fredericksburg was a commanding one, being on an eminence and approached from the city, first over a plain, and then up along a steep acclivity. It is also well known that General Franklin was in position some three miles below

Fredericksburg, where the ground in front of him was less difficult, and that Franklin, from his position, was to co-operate with the force that lay in Fredericksburg. The fog delayed operations until well into the morning, but finally began to lift, and we heard firing back of the city, in the direction of Marye's Heights. Soon troops began to move out, aides went dashing through the streets with orders, one command after another gathered itself up and moved off, but from our position in a street running parallel with the river, no observations could be had of the operations. In the meantime artillery fire had begun on both sides, and although the enemy appeared to studiously avoid firing upon any part of the city, and directed their attention to our guns posted on the bluff across the river, yet occasionally a shell fell short and came uncomfortably near. One dropped on a roof near by, and seemed to glance off and pass over our heads. This was one of the disagreeable situations,—to be penned up between the houses, unable to see anywhere in particular or to do anything whatever, and feel yourself under fire, and liable to be cut down like a dog, was extremely dis-

turbing. I can't really say that I felt so very much better when I saw a mounted officer ride up to General Nagle, commanding our brigade, and saw the instant bustle of preparation, mounting in haste and galloping to different parts of the line. We were under way at once, and soon found ourselves outside the city, and marching in line of battle toward the field of action. We at once came under fire, and suddenly one of the privates in my company dropped to the ground, writhing as in great agony. I felt very sorry for the poor fellow, but could not stop to care for him. I think I directed some one to look after him. It turned out afterwards that the fellow was safe and sound, unharmed by any rebel bullet. He had evidently made up his mind to continue so, and adhered to his resolution with great fortitude.

We advanced across the plain in line of battle at double-quick until we reached rising ground and came to a steep bank affording protection from infantry fire, and here we were halted and ordered to lie down for a short rest. Our artillery, from its position on the bluff across the river, was shelling the heights in front of us, their shots passing over our

heads, and the rebel batteries replying; hence we were under a sort of a canopy, although not one suggestive of the utmost protection, especially when an occasional shot from our guns fell short and dropped upon the intervening ground.

The scene was grand in the extreme. The roar of the cannonade, the hurtling of shells through the air, the rattle of musketry fire in our front, the shouts of officers and men, the rapid movements of large bodies of troops to be seen in various directions, and the playing of numberless military bands, all blended in the uproar. Victory seemed certain, and the more so because we heard the advancing fire of Franklin far to our left, which gave the almost certain assurance that he would soon flank the works in our front, and from a far better vantage ground unite with us in driving the enemy from the height.

Here a mishap occurred to the left of our line which was a never-ending source of regret. The bank behind which we were sheltered presented an angle to our line, so that the two companies on the left were hidden from the others in that position, my company (B) being on the extreme left. I spoke

to the company commander next on our right to watch carefully when the regiment moved, so that we should not get broken off from the rest of the line. There was a ravine pretty close to our left which necessitated moving to the right as we advanced. Captain Longstreet and myself were reconnoitering the lay of the land along this ravine for a few moments, and meanwhile a shell from the enemy had struck our line near where it broke around the angle, taking off a leg of one of the men and causing some confusion. Receiving no notice of the movements of the main part of the regiment, which was around the bend, I looked for it, and found it had moved on to the right, leaving the two left companies broken off. Colonel Browne was at the time practically without a field officer to help him, and, as I believe, did not know of the configuration of the ground at the left. Major Dyer had been incapacitated for further service by a fragment of a shell, and we were left without any knowledge as to what part of the field we were destined. We immediately pressed forward in the direction supposed to have been taken by the rest of the regiment until we entered a railroad cut. We

found our right had just preceded us over this ground. The cut here was along a side hill with scarcely any bank on the side as we entered, but a high bank in front of us. This high bank was a partial shelter from the fire, but only partial, as it ran obliquely to the line of the enemy's works. We found a Maryland regiment in this cut that refused to stir. There was a brigadier in full uniform, exhorting with all the eloquence he could command, but to no purpose, so far as I saw. I afterwards learned that our orders were, on leaving the city, to follow this regiment.

While advancing to the railroad cut we could hear Franklin thundering far down to our left, and fancied by the sound that his line was advancing, and we dashed ahead greatly encouraged by this circumstance, although chagrined and disappointed at our unfortunate separation from the rest of the regiment, and still worse at being separated from our commander, scarcely knowing what use to make of ourselves, except, if possible, to reattach ourselves to the main part of the regiment. Halting a few moments in the railroad cut for a breathing spell, after a double-quick, we scrambled up the bank to go for-

ward. We had already been under quite a fire in reaching the railroad, but when my head passed above the top of that bank it seemed to me there was a perfect hurricane of lead howling, screeching and hissing through the air. The ground was strewn with dead and wounded and débris of all sorts,—haversacks, knapsacks, canteens and broken muskets. It seemed to me, as I stood up, that the air above my head was thick enough with lead to cut my finger off if I had held it up. I could compare it to nothing but a swarm of bees in the air. This, of course, happened to be where the fire concentrated. I saw nothing like it anywhere else that day I knew very well that a large proportion of all the fire of musketry is too high to be dangerous. If I had not been comforted by that belief, acquired in previous reading, I would not answer for my conduct as a soldier at that particular juncture.

Captain Longstreet, far in advance, reckless of himself, waving his sword and shouting "Forward!" was the very picture of a hero. Too impetuous to wait the slower movements of the company, he continued to charge forward, and it devolved upon me

to bring the company up the bank and take it over the exposed ground directly in front. I made every man bend forward and thus diminish the danger from rifle balls, and I believe we did not lose a man in crossing at this exposed point. We now found ourselves on the side hill that leads up to the crest. The fire slackened somewhat, and the irregularities of the ground were sufficient to protect our men, and here we were astray on a battle-field endeavoring to find the main part of our command without success. Anxious inquiries elicited no information, or were unheeded. There was no enemy to be seen and nobody to direct our fire, and we lay here through the mortal hours of that day perfectly conscious that our army could accomplish nothing at this point, and notified by the retreating fire away to the left that Franklin's movement was a failure. We knew that our presence was of no use, but we remained, hoping for orders of some kind, our men firing an occasional shot at the undiscoverable enemy.

Towards sunset occurred a grand and thrilling military spectacle. This was the charge of General Humphreys' division from Hooker's command, which

was the final effort of that day of great efforts and great failures. Looking away to the right and rear, I saw a division coming in on the double-quick, with their muskets on the right shoulder, glistening in the declining sun. As the head of the column reached the foot of this steep ascent, it turned to the left and stretched itself along parallel to the heights, faced to the front and halted. So deadly had been the fire that day that scarcely a horse was to be seen on the field. General Humphreys, however, sat upon his charger as the fire redoubled upon his line. I ran down to near where the General was preparing for the charge, and heard the orders to "Face to the front and lie down." He sat in the slanting rays of the setting sun under the redoubled fire, coolly waiting for his men to gain their breath for the final effort. Presently his sword flashed in the air, and the orders, "Rise up—forward—guide centre," rang down the line, and that line of battle started up, up the hill, wavering, undulating with men dropping, dropping, and others staggering to the rear, until it was a broken and ragged line. It stopped, and the final charge was over. Out of four thousand men, nearly

half fell in a quarter of an hour. "Having lost," says General Hooker, "as many men as my orders required me to lose, I suspended the attack, and directed that the men should hold for the advance line a ditch which would afford shelter."

The unfortunate separation of the two left companies from the rest of the line deprived us of the example and direction of a lion-hearted leader. Throughout the day, Colonel Browne stood erect, disdaining shelter, observing the field and directing his men. A shot passed through his cape, but left the wearer unharmed. Lieutenant Abbott seized the regimental colors and planted them far in advance of the line. Color Sergeant DeVolve stood by, coolly saying, "You will probably fall in a few moments, and I will be ready to take them." Lieutenant Briggs, of Company A, was cut to pieces with minie balls. Lieutenant Hopkins, of Company I, was struck on the instep with a piece of shell, and his foot was amputated. He was sent to a hospital in Washington, and died there. He had been sick for several days, and was too ill for duty the day of the fight, but his captain was in a hospital across the

river, and he refused to relinquish command of his company. A shell passed in front of Lieutenant D. R. Ballou, of Company C, so near his face as to cause concussion. Blinded and dazed, he staggered back down into the city and across the river. He was sent to the hospital, where he was confined many weeks. A minie ball tore through the face of Lieutenant Lawton, of Company C, producing an ugly wound. Sergeant Pollard, of Company G, despairing of regaining the main body, joined another regiment and shared its fortunes, being wounded severely in the arm. He displayed great gallantry, and was promoted for his bravery, receiving honorable mention from the Colonel whom he served that day. The loss of the regiment in killed and wounded was one hundred and nine, and ninety-five missing.

After nightfall we found ourselves together again in the city in the position which we had left in the morning. Inquiring for the missing, my old school-fellow and friend, Lieutenant Ballou, was not to be found, and I returned to the field to look for him. The night was dark, and all over the battle ground, from one end to the other, lay the dead and wounded,

the groans and cries of the latter coming up from the darkness. The ambulance men were busy collecting the sufferers. They were carried in the first place and laid in rows adjacent to a road that climbed the hill from the city. The ambulances, one after another in a continuous line, came past, were loaded and driven back to the town. After a fruitless search, I mounted the box with the driver of an ambulance and rode back. I then saw that there was apparently a continuous line of these vehicles moving in a circle; as soon as one had received its load, another was ready. The floors of all the churches had been swept clean of the pews and converted into hospitals; the surgeons, in ante-rooms and chancels, upon improvised tables, were amputating limbs and dressing wounds.

The next day (Sunday) was one of anxious expectation. Huddled back into the streets and lanes of the city again, it seemed almost a miracle that General Lee did not attempt the rout of our army from his vantage ground above us and the river at our back. There were rumors that General Burnside had resolved to range his Ninth Army Corps in col-

umn of regiments, and, placing himself at the head, drive that column like a battering ram against the centre of the line on the heights, and break it by sheer force of numbers and impetus, but the day passed quietly, and so did the next. Meanwhile the ambulance men were busy again, emptying the churches of the wounded and conveying them across the river.

Monday night came on, dark and cloudy. In the evening we had orders to move. Proceeding up through the city towards the heights again, on the outskirts, we were ordered to observe the strictest silence ; not a tin cup must rattle, not a loud word ; all orders were given in whispers. We took up a position within a few rods of the rebel pickets with orders to hold that position to the last man. The inky darkness and our extreme caution alone shielded us from the attention of our friends, the enemy.

Having selected our ground, Colonel Browne sent for some shovels to throw up earthworks, and posted a force in a brick building on our flank. There not being shovels enough to go round, I divided our company into reliefs, so as to accomplish the most

possible. Those not employed for the time being, lay on the ground to the rear.

While silently delving in the loamy soil, a rifle shot in our ranks broke the stillness, followed by a groan. A man on the ground had carelessly discharged his piece and wounded a comrade. Now we were in for it; but no! Every man held his breath, and all was quiet again. Suddenly a whispered order ran down the line, "Drop your shovels"—"get into line"—"leave everything." We filed down into the town. Here and there the ruins of a burned building flickered and smouldered, but where were the legions that a few hours before peopled the thoroughfares? That city was as deserted and silent as the tombs. We marched on through empty streets to the upper end of the town, down to the pontoon bridges, crossed over, and the city was alone.

